

97-84146-30

U.S. Immigration and
Naturalization Service

Questions and answers on
alien registration

[Washington]

[1940]

97-84146-30

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Box 630 U. S. Immigration and naturalization service.

Questions and answers on alien registration. (Rev. ed.)
Washington, United States Department of justice, Immigra-
tion and naturalization service, Alien registration division
1940,

22 p., 1 l. 21½ x 9".

1. Aliens—U. S. 2. U. S.—Foreign population. i. Title. ii. Title:
Alien registration.

Library of Congress

JX4263.A44 1940 1

40-20243

[8]

325.73

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TECHNICAL MICROFORM DATA

FILM SIZE: 35 mmREDUCTION RATIO: 9:1IMAGE PLACEMENT: IA IIA IB IIBDATE FILMED: 7-28-97INITIALS: FBTRACKING # : 26218

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**QUESTIONS AND
ANSWERS
ON
ALIEN
REGISTRATION**

(Revised Edition)

308
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Box 630

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE
Immigration and Naturalization Service
Alien Registration Division**

6/18/40 VOL. 1

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ON ALIEN REGISTRATION

The Alien Registration Act of 1940, as passed by the Congress of the United States, requires all those who are not American citizens to register with the United States Government during the period of August 27 through December 26, 1940.

In connection with this registration program we have received a great many inquiries pertaining to various provisions of the Act. This pamphlet, arranged in question and answer form, attempts to answer the questions about the Alien Registration program that have been asked most frequently. Intended as a guide, it makes no pretense of being a complete interpretation of the Alien Registration Act. Persons who wish more detailed information should consult the official regulations at post offices, or address their inquiries to this Division.

EARL G. HARRISON,

*Director of Alien Registration,
United States Department of Justice,
Washington, D. C.*

OCTOBER 1, 1940.

1. Why is the United States Government registering and fingerprinting all aliens?

So that the United States Government may know how many aliens are within its borders, who they are, where they are, and something about them.

2. Do other countries require their aliens to register?

Yes. Alien registration has been a common practice in most European countries for many years.

3. Who is an alien?

Generally speaking, any foreign-born person who has not become naturalized or who has not acquired citizenship through others, is an alien. (For a more detailed definition consult official regulations at your post office.)

4. Who is required to register?

All aliens, irrespective of age. Aliens 14 years of age or over must register in person and be fingerprinted. Aliens under 14 years of age must be registered by a parent or guardian, but this will not include fingerprinting. Incompetents who are aliens must be registered by a guardian or person in charge.

5. Must aliens under 14 years of age accompany the parent or guardian who registers for them?

No.

6. *When alien children reach the age of 14, must they register in person?*

Yes, within 30 days; and at that time they will be fingerprinted.

7. *What procedure should be followed in the case of alien children who reach their fourteenth birthday during the registration period?*

It is suggested that such children wait until their fourteenth birthday and then register in person.

8. *Does long residence in the United States constitute citizenship?*

No. A foreign-born alien remains an alien until he is formally admitted to citizenship or acquires citizenship through others.

9. *Are all persons born in the United States American citizens?*

Yes, all persons born in the United States are citizens, irrespective of race, unless they have lost their citizenship by swearing allegiance to another country, through marriage, or in any other manner. The only persons who do not acquire American citizenship through birth are those born of parents who were foreign diplomatic officers or foreign sovereigns at the time of birth. (For more detailed information concerning citizenship consult official regulations at your post office.)

10. *Are aliens who have registered under State or local alien registration laws required to register under the Federal Alien Registration Act of 1940?*

Yes.

11. *Are aliens holding first citizenship papers required to register and be fingerprinted?*

Yes. Such persons are not yet citizens.

12. *Are aliens in this country on a temporary visa required to register?*

Yes. (See questions 21, 53, 55.)

13. *If a person becomes a citizen during the registration period, is he required to register?*

No.

14. *Should refugees and refugee children register?*

Yes. All noncitizens must register. (See questions 21, 53, 54, 55.)

15. *Does a foreign-born child of foreign-born naturalized parents who were naturalized while the child was a minor have to register?*

Generally speaking, no; but there are certain qualifications which may be found in the official regulations available at all post offices.

16. *Are former United States citizens who, in any manner, have lost their United States citizenship, required to register?*

Yes. All noncitizens must register.

17. Do citizens of the United States convicted of crimes lose their citizenship and, therefore, have to register?

No. While United States citizens may lose certain rights and privileges of citizenship when they are convicted of certain crimes, they do not lose their citizenship, and therefore, do not have to register.

18. What is the status of a former citizen of the United States who has sworn allegiance to another government?

He is no longer a citizen and is required to register.

19. If an alien is bedridden, either in his home or in a hospital, how does he register?

If the local postmaster is notified, suitable arrangements will be made for his registration at home or hospital.

20. If an alien is confined in an institution, how does he register?

The local postmaster will make arrangements for aliens confined in public institutions. Officers or superintendents of private institutions should notify the local postmaster and he will make the proper arrangements.

21. When must an alien register and be fingerprinted?

If an alien is in the United States on August 27, 1940, and expects to remain be-

yond December 26, 1940, he must register on or before the latter date. If an alien enters the United States after August 27, 1940, and expects to remain for more than 30 days, he must register and be fingerprinted before the expiration of such 30 days, unless he registered and was fingerprinted at an American consular office when he secured his visa.

22. Where must an alien register and be fingerprinted?

At any first or second class post office (including branches) or at any post office located at a county seat. In some areas, other public places may be officially designated for registration. If an alien is unable to appear at an officially designated registration office, he may apply at the post office which serves the area in which he resides, and suitable arrangements may be made.

23. How will an alien know which are first and second class post offices?

By asking any postmaster or letter carrier.

24. Must an alien register at a post office near his home?

No. He may register at any registration post office or at any public place officially designated for registration.

25. Does anyone have the right to tell an alien when or where he must register?

No. Aliens may register in any registration post office or public place designated

for registration and at any time they wish before the end of the registration period, December 26, 1940. (See questions 21, 22.)

26. *What is the penalty for failure to register?*

A possible fine of \$1,000, imprisonment for 6 months, or both.

27. *What is the penalty for making false statements in registering?*

A possible fine of \$1,000, imprisonment for 6 months, or both; and possibly deportation.

28. *Are the penalties listed in questions 26 and 27 applicable to parents or guardians of alien children?*

Yes. The same penalties are applicable. (See questions 4, 5, 6.)

29. *Can an alien get in advance a copy of the registration questions he will be required to answer?*

Yes. Specimen forms, containing the registration questions, are available at all post offices.

30. *Are specimen forms free?*

Yes. All papers and services connected with registration and fingerprinting are free.

31. *Is there any fee for registration and fingerprinting?*

No. Registration and fingerprinting are free.

32. *What steps should be taken by an alien to register?*

- (1) Secure specimen registration form from any post office.
- (2) Fill out the specimen form at home or elsewhere.
- (3) Take this filled-out form to any registration post office (or public place officially designated for registration) during the registration period, August 27 through December 26, 1940. (See questions 21, 22, 23.)

33. *Where can an alien get instructions as to how to answer the registration questions?*

The specimen registration form (see question 32) contains both the registration questions and detailed instructions as to how to answer these questions. In addition, the alien may consult with his postmaster, relatives, friends, social agencies, or anyone else he chooses. He may also write the Alien Registration Division, Department of Justice, Washington, D. C. (See next question.) The alien is cautioned, however, to get all the help he may need in time to register by December 26, 1940. The responsibility of registering by that time rests entirely with the alien.

34. *May an alien obtain information as to the date of his entry, name of vessel, etc., by writing to the Immigration and Naturalization Service or the Alien Registration Division?*

Such detailed information will not be available from either office, in time for use in registering. Registrants needing such

information should make inquiry of relatives or friends who were traveling companions on the journey to the United States or who might have knowledge of the details of such journey; or by consulting such relevant documents as passports, correspondence, passenger lists, baggage labels. (See question 68.)

35. *If an alien already has "first papers," is it necessary for him to bring them along when he registers?*

No. It is not necessary if he has filled out the sample registration form in full. However, it is advisable that he refer to his first papers in filling out the sample form inasmuch as much of the registration information required can be found in those papers.

36. *Is it necessary for an alien to produce a birth certificate in order to register?*

No. However, it is advisable for him to check with his birth certificate in answering the question dealing with the date and place of his birth.

37. *Is it necessary for the alien to bring a photograph of himself when he registers?*

No. No photographs are required in the registration.

38. *Can anyone register for an alien?*

No. Every alien 14 years of age or older must register in person. (See questions 5, 6, 7.)

39. *Can an alien register by mail?*

No. He must register and be fingerprinted in person at any post office or public place which is designated to register aliens.

40. *Does the Alien Registration Act apply to naturalized citizens?*

No. Only noncitizens are required to register.

41. *If a resident of the United States is in doubt as to his citizenship status, should he register?*

Yes, provided that the doubt cannot be cleared up during the registration period. Registration in no way affects citizenship status.

42. *How may a person establish definitely that his parents have been naturalized?*

By determining when and in what court final naturalization papers were issued, and applying at that court for an examination of those records. It is likely that in some cases this examination cannot take place before the expiration of the registration period, December 26, 1940. In such cases persons in doubt about their citizenship should register for their own protection. (See question 41.)

43. *How can American citizens cooperate with the Alien Registration program?*

By explaining, upon request, the registration procedure to aliens of their acquaintance; and by helping to avoid any embarrassment or harassment of those who must register.

44. *How can aliens best cooperate with the United States Government in carrying out the Alien Registration program?*

By filling out the specimen form in advance (see question 32); by registering as early as possible; and by urging other aliens to do the same.

45. *May an alien be accompanied by an interpreter while registering?*

Yes. If the alien doesn't speak English, it would be helpful for him to bring an interpreter, preferably one who is a member of his family or a friend. Post offices will take into account the presence of foreign-born groups and will, wherever possible, make arrangements accordingly.

46. *May an alien consult with relatives or friends, or a social agency, in arriving at the correct answers to the registration questions?*

Yes. He may consult with anyone.

47. *Will post office hours be extended to permit an alien to register without losing time from his work?*

Yes, wherever possible and where local conditions require it, post offices will make suitable arrangements.

48. *Will the information furnished by the alien be held confidential?*

The Alien Registration Act provides that all registration and fingerprint records be secret and confidential, and be made available only with the approval of the Attorney General of the United States.

49. *Is the alien required to answer any questions other than those which appear on registration and fingerprinting forms?*

No. Postmasters have been instructed to ask no questions other than those which appear on the registration and fingerprinting forms. (See question 68.)

50. *Will the registered alien be able to prove that he has registered?*

Yes. A receipt card will be sent to every alien who registers. This card will serve as evidence of his registration.

51. *Does an alien become a citizen by registering?*

No. Registration in no way affects citizenship status.

52. *How long will it take the alien to register and be fingerprinted?*

Registration should not take more than 20 to 30 minutes, if the specimen form has been made out, fully and carefully, in advance. (See question 32.)

53. *What is required of an alien, or the parent or guardian of an alien, after he has registered?*

The Alien Registration Act, 1940, requires all resident aliens to report each change of residence address within 5 days of such change. Other aliens—visitors, students, and others not admitted for permanent residence in the United States—must re-

port their address every 3 months whether they change their address or not. Printed forms for such address changes and reports may be obtained at any post office.

54. *If a person enters the United States as a permanent resident after August 27, 1940, is he required to report his residence address?*

Yes. If such a person did not state his United States address when he registered abroad at the American consulate or has taken an address other than the one he listed, he must report his residence address to the Alien Registration Division, Immigration and Naturalization Service, within 5 days after he has established such an address in the United States. Thereafter, he is required to report each change of residence address within 5 days of such change. (See question 53.)

55. *If a person enters the United States on a temporary basis after August 27, 1940, is he required to report his residence address?*

Yes. If such a person did not state his United States address when he registered abroad at the American consulate or has taken an address other than the one he listed, he must report his residence address to the Alien Registration Division, Immigration and Naturalization Service, within 5 days after he has established such an address in the United States. Thereafter he is required to report his residence address every 3 months, whether he changes it or not. (See question 53.)

56. *Are alien migratory workers obliged to report each new change of address?*

No. The Alien Registration Act provides that only changes of *residence* address be reported. A change of residence means a change of permanent dwelling place. An alien acquires a new residence address when he moves to a new place of abode with the intention of making it his permanent dwelling place. A person engaged on a temporary job, away from his permanent residence, is not obliged to report his temporary address.

57. *What is the penalty for failure to notify the Immigration and Naturalization Service of any change in residence address?*

A fine of \$100, 30 days' imprisonment, or both.

58. *Is an alien required to notify the Immigration and Naturalization Service of any change in business address?*

No.

59. *Will aliens in Alaska, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands be required to register?*

Yes. Registration procedure there will be the same as in the United States.

60. *Are Filipinos required to register?*

Filipinos in the United States who are not citizens are required to register. Filipinos in the Philippine Islands need not register.

61. *If aliens, under misapprehension, have been voting in local, State, or national elections, are such persons still aliens, and should they register?*

Yes. Such persons are still aliens and, therefore, must register.

62. *Do noncitizens acquire citizenship when they are adopted by American citizens?*

No; citizenship cannot be derived through adoption. Aliens who have been adopted by citizens must register, unless they have acquired citizenship in their own right.

63. *Does an alien woman who is married to an American citizen have to register?*

If an alien woman, who was eligible to naturalization, married an American citizen before September 22, 1922, she became a citizen thereby and does not have to register, unless she has since lost her citizenship status. An alien woman who married a citizen after September 22, 1922 is still an alien and must therefore register, unless she has been naturalized in her own right since that time.

64. *Does a woman citizen lose her citizenship by marrying an alien?*

Women citizens who married aliens since September 22, 1922, or prior to March 2, 1907, have not lost their citizenship through marriage. However, if a woman citizen married an alien during the period of March 2, 1907, and September 22, 1922 she lost her citizenship unless her husband became naturalized during that period. (See question 65.) In the case of native-born American women who lost their citizenship solely as a result of marrying an

alien prior to September 22, 1922, Congress has specifically repatriated the woman in all cases where either (a) the marriage has been terminated, or (b) the woman has lived continuously in the United States since the date of her marriage. Such native-born American women need not, therefore, register in accordance with the Alien Registration Act. The repatriation provisions above referred to do not apply to women who were citizens through naturalization at the time of their marriage.

65. *What is the citizenship status of a woman citizen who married an alien during the World War?*

Under a recent ruling of the Attorney General, she lost her citizenship status as of July 2, 1921, the official end of the United States' participation in the World War, if the marriage still existed on that date and if her husband had not become naturalized before that date. In the case, however, of native-born American women, Congress has specifically repatriated the woman in every instance (a) where the marriage has been terminated, or (b) where the woman has lived continuously in the United States since the date of her marriage. (See question 64.)

66. *Will registration take place publicly in post offices?*

Postmasters will arrange to register aliens as privately as possible.

67. *Why should an alien who is in this country illegally register instead of "taking a chance" on not being detected?*

There are reasons why such an alien should register. By not registering, he (a) sub-

jects himself to prosecution, the imposition of a fine and imprisonment; (b) he prejudices his position as a possible subject for the exercise of the discretionary powers vested in the Attorney General under the Immigration laws with respect to suspension of deportation and other matters; (c) he prejudices his position with respect to possible eligibility for naturalization; and (d) he also prejudices his position with respect to other laws of the United States. (Many aliens who entered the United States illegally prior to July 1, 1924, can have their entry legalized in accordance with the law enacted on August 7, 1939.)

68. *If an alien is unable to answer a question or any part of a question, what does he do?*

If he has exhausted every means at his command to secure the information, he may state "Don't know."

69. *May Czechs, Poles, and other peoples who are citizens or subjects of nations recently invaded, answer question 4 in the registration form with the name of the country which was invaded, rather than with the name of the invading nation?*

Yes. Poles and Czechs, for example, may answer question 4 with "Poland" and "Czechoslovakia."

70. *What questions will all aliens 14 years or older be required to answer?*

There will be 17 questions, some of them subdivided, as follows:

- (1) Name, name under which alien entered the United States, and all

aliases, nicknames, and maiden names of married women?

- (2) Residence address?
- (3) Place and date of birth?
- (4) Citizen or subject of what country?
- (5) Sex, marital status, and race?
- (6) Physical description?
- (7) Place and date of last arrival in the United States, mode of transportation, how admitted? Date of first arrival in the United States?
- (8) Length of time in the United States, and length of time alien intends to remain?
- (9) Occupation and employer?
- (10) Membership in clubs, organizations, or societies?
- (11) Military or naval service?
- (12) Citizenship status in the United States (first papers, etc.)?
- (13) Close relatives living in the United States?
- (14) Criminal record?
- (15) Affiliation with organizations "devoted in whole or in part to influencing or furthering the political activities, public relations, or public policy of a foreign government?"
- (16) Name of nearest relative or person to be notified in case of emergency?
- (17) Have you ever been fingerprinted? When? Where?

71. What questions will the parents or guardians of aliens under 14 be required to answer in their behalf?

All questions except 6, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16 and 17. Under question 9 the parent or guardian registering an alien under 14 years of age will state his own name, address, and business. Under question 12, the information on status of citizenship proceedings should be given with respect to either parent of the alien in accordance with the instructions.



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